The Use of Slang by Gen Z Female Influencers on Instagram and Twitter (X)

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ABSTRACT

Communication on social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter (X) is inherently informal, colloquial, and non-standard, making it an ideal space for the use of slang, a central focus of this small-scale study. This research aims to investigate the use of slang by female Gen Z influencers on Instagram and Twitter (X). The objectives are: (1) to identify the types of slang used, and (2) to determine the most frequently used slang. Purposive sampling was utilized to select five participants, all female Malaysian beauty and lifestyle influencers born between 1996 and the present, representing Generation Z (Gen Z). All the selected influencers belong to the macro-influencer category, with 100,000 to 1 million followers on their Instagram and Twitter (X) accounts. Data for the study were collected from Instagram and Twitter posts of these influencers, focusing on posts containing slang. Content analysis was employed to examine the slang in these posts, using Barseghyan's (2013) framework of slang types for categorization. The posts were coded and categorized into major themes based on Barseghyan's classifications. The findings revealed that the participants used eight out of the ten slang types proposed by Barseghyan (2013): (1) letter homophones, (2) punctuation, capitalization, and other symbols, (3) onomatopoeic spellings, (4) keyboard-generated icons and smileys, (5) flaming, (6) shortening, (7) clipping, and (8) compounding. Among these, "shortening" emerged as the most frequently used type of slang. This study holds several significant implications. It advances slang research within sociolinguistics, particularly in the context of internet and modern slang, and enriches the literature on linguistic practices in online communication. Furthermore, it provides a valuable reference for future researchers interested in internet and Gen Z slang. The study also offers guidance for developing innovative research topics and methodologies, supporting a deeper understanding of the linguistic impact of contemporary slang usage.

Keywords: Gen Z, Slang, Influencers, Instagram, Twitter (X)

INTRODUCTION

Slang is an informal, nonstandard variety of speech characterized by newly coined and rapidly changing words and phrases (Nordquist, 2018), used by specific groups of people. As a result, the meanings of these words may not be immediately apparent to everyone. Nadia (2021) further explains that slang functions as a form of style within a community. Language has evolved significantly due to the rise of online communication, with slang becoming a central part of the young generation's experience. Slang is especially associated with young people, who are eager to explore their identities, remain relevant, and lead vibrant lives in the digital age (Norshahira & Nur, 2021), particularly among Gen Z. With advancements in technology, social media platforms have become increasingly popular among youths, resulting in shifts in communication patterns today.

Gen Z refers to a group of people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Gen Z social media influencers have the power to impact a large audience with their creativity in incorporating slang into captions or written text on their social media posts. The rise of youths as social media users has led to the creation of the world's largest virtual community, contributing to the emergence of internet slang as a new linguistic form to meet the

communicative demands of social networking (Norshahira & Nur, 2021). Young people use internet slang to streamline communication by abbreviating words and phrases into new forms.

In the past, there have been few studies on the use of slang by Gen Z influencers on social media. Additionally, the slang used by Malaysian youths on social media, particularly from a sociolinguistic perspective, has received little attention (Norshahira & Nur, 2021). Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the variety of slang used by female Gen Z influencers in their communication on Instagram and Twitter (X).

A. Research Objectives and Research Questions

The following are the research objectives of the study. 1)To investigate the types of slang used by female Gen Z influencers on Instagram and Twitter (X). 2)To identify the most frequently used slang type by female Gen Z influencers on Instagram and Twitter (X). In order to address the research objectives, two research questions were formulated as follows:

RQ1: What types of slang are used by female Gen Z influencers on Instagram and Twitter (X)?

RQ2: What type of slang is used the most by female Gen Z influencers on Instagram and Twitter (X)?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Definition of Slang

Slang refers to the non-standard use of words in a language and is considered an integral part of language in society (Rezeki & Sagala, 2019). Additionally, slang can involve the creation of new words derived from another language (Habibiloyevna, 2021). Slang words are informal expressions that are not commonly used in the speaker's formal native language (Olimjonovna, 2022) but are widely employed in daily conversations, social media, and mobile platforms (Sun et al., 2021). The development of language and social dynamics within society have contributed to the increasing use of slang words (Budiasa et al., 2021). Muhammad and Mayasari (2022) aptly defined slang as an ever-changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity and cohesiveness within a group or align with broader societal trends.

B. Internet Slang

As internet-mediated communication systems continue to expand and adapt to the demands of an increasingly advanced technological world, internet users face ongoing pressure to modify their language to align with evolving communication norms (Barseghyan, 2013). This evolution has driven the widespread use of internet slang across various social media platforms. Internet slang, created and popularised by online users, emerges from language variation, as noted by Liu et al. (2019). With the growing number of social media users, internet slang has developed into a distinct linguistic form designed to meet the communicative needs of online communities (Nor et al., 2020).

Characterized by its innovation and creativity, internet slang also serves as a tool for engaging advertising (Liu et al., 2019). Winarto (2019) observes that internet slang is not confined to digital spaces; it is also integrated into daily conversations, such as SMS communication. This new form of language adds fun, diversity, and efficiency to interpersonal interactions, making it particularly appealing to younger generations (Kathy, 2020). While internet slang remains largely unaccepted by the broader population outside its originating groups, it plays a significant role in adolescent communication on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and others (Namvar, 2014).

C. Categories of Internet Slang

With the evolution of internet slang, researchers have proposed various classifications to better understand this linguistic phenomenon. This paper focuses on two key categorizations: Craig's (2003) and Barseghyan's (2013) frameworks. The distinctions between these classifications are presented in the following tables for clarity and comparison.

Table 1: Craig (2003) Slang Categories

Category	Example
Phonetic replacements	Ur, every1
Acronyms	OMG, LOL
Abbreviations	Ppl, bc
Inanities	lolz

Table 2: Barseghyan (2013) Slang Categories

Category	Example
Letter homophones	Lol, Omg
Punctuation, capitalization and other symbols	!!!!!
Onomatopoeic spelling	hahaha
Keyboard-generated icons and smiley	:)
Flaming	Fuck ye
Shortening (acronym and abbreviations)	Srsly (seriously)
Leetspeak	W1k1p3d14
Clipping	Exam (examination)
Compound	Cyber-, de-. en-, giga-
Blend	Brunch, Manglish, Singlish

Craig's list was developed in 2003, while Barseghyan's list was created in 2013. As shown in Table 2, the categories of Internet slang have evolved over time, with new categories being added.

D. Gen Z & Gen Z Slang

Seemiller and Grace (2017) define Gen Z as the generation born between 1995 and 2010. It can also be said that Gen Z refers to individuals born after 1996 and up to the present. Gen Z has been profoundly shaped by the advancement of technology, the internet, and social media, which has led to stereotypes such as being tech-addicted, anti-social, or social justice warriors. Furthermore, Gen Z is often referred to as "digital natives," as they grew up immersed in technology, with the internet being an integral aspect of their daily lives (The ASEAN Post Team, 2020). Their constant engagement in online communication has contributed to the rapid development of what is now termed "Gen Z slang", which continues to evolve with today's language trends (Lihawa et al., 2021).

Gen Z has created and modified slang to meet their language needs, resulting in new forms of slang with distinct meanings. For instance, the term "Cheugy" was coined by Gen Z to describe things that are slightly off-trend or outdated. It was introduced by Gaby Rasson, a 23-year-old software developer in Los Angeles, who started using the word in 2013 while attending Beverly Hills High School (Lorenz, 2021). "Cheugy" has become a popular term on TikTok, as has the term "W," a slang word created by Gen Z to abbreviate "win" (Enan, 2024). Another example of Gen Z slang is the term "CEO," which refers to someone who is highly skilled or a master at something. However, the original meaning of "CEO," according to the Oxford Dictionary, is "chief executive officer," the highest-ranking person in an institution. This demonstrates how Gen Z creates and modifies slang as they see fit, using it as a form of identity (Lihawa et al., 2021).

In 2019, James Callahan, a sociology teacher at a high school in Massachusetts, released a dictionary of Gen Z slang, listing 73 terms and their meanings (Ciampaglia, 2020). This dictionary serves as a valuable resource for

adults who feel overwhelmed by the constantly evolving world of slang. Table 3 shows samples of slang words found in the dictionary of Gen Z slang (Ciampaglia, 2020).

Table 3: Sample of slang words from the dictionary of Gen Z slang (Ciampaglia, 2020).

Term/Saying	Definition
A force	Unnecessarily excessive effort
Bang 30s	To fight someone, as in a physical altercation
Beat your face/cake your face	Apply makeup
bops	A modern enjoyable song
bouta	I am about to…
bread	Future money
Catch a fade/catch these hands	To get punched and/or knocked out
Clap back	Respond to an insult with an equal or greater insult
clapped	A crazy person; someone who was punched
crackie	Someone who juuls/smokes
cross fade	Doubly inebriated

E. Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers, also known as online celebrities, build their reputations through expertise in specific topics by consistently creating posts about these topics on their preferred social media platforms. This content attracts large followings of enthusiastic and engaged users who closely follow their views (Geyser, 2024). Influencers are admired, and their opinions are highly valued by their followers, as they are perceived as "experts" in their respective fields (Geyser, 2024). According to Santora (2024), influencers are classified into four categories based on their number of followers: nano-influencers (1,000 to 10,000 followers), micro-influencers (10,000 to 100,000 followers), macro-influencers (100,000 to 1 million followers), and mega-influencers (over 1 million followers) on social media platforms.

F. Previous Related Studies

In recent years, numerous studies have explored slang, particularly internet slang, to explain and describe this phenomenon. Sabri et al. (2020) investigated the use of English internet slang on social media, while Izazi and Tengku Sepora (2020) examined slang variations used by Malay language speakers on social platforms. Similarly, Rezeki and Segala (2019) focused on a semantic analysis of slang employed by millennials on social media. Sabri et al. (2020) concluded that slang usage has become a widespread trend among social media users in Malaysia and beyond. Internet users across different social and age groups have, to some extent, adopted these new "writing styles."

Many linguists have long believed that the Internet negatively impacts the future of language, potentially leading to a decline in linguistic standards (Barseghyan, 2013). Some even attribute the deterioration of formal English to the rising prevalence of electronic communication. This linguistic shift has been widely criticized by both the mass media and educators, who argue that it reflects declining literacy and linguistic skills. For example, Rabab'ah et al. (2016) found that the use of instant text messaging language negatively affected students'

academic writing proficiency. However, some studies challenge this view. Indera and Ali (2021), for instance, investigated the relationship between internet slang usage and language learning and found no significant correlation between the two variables, suggesting that the influence of internet slang may not be as detrimental as previously assumed.

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Methodology

This study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to achieve its research objectives. Specifically, these objectives were to identify the types of slang used by female Gen Z influencers on Instagram and Twitter (X) and to determine the most frequently used slang type based on Barseghyan's (2013) framework of slang categories. Purposive sampling was utilized to select five participants, all female Malaysian beauty and lifestyle influencers born between 1996 and the present, representing Generation Z (Gen Z).The selected participants were labelled as 'PA', 'PB', 'PC', 'PD', and 'PE', and will be referred to by these labels throughout the paper. The decision to focus on female influencers is based on evidence suggesting that females are more active on social media than their male counterparts. Additionally, females tend to be more vocal, expressive, and prolific in their content creation. Research also indicates that males often use more authoritative and formal language compared to females (Atanasova, 2016). Another selection criterion was that the influencers should belong to the macro-influencer category, with 100,000 to 1 million followers on their Instagram and Twitter (X) accounts. Macro-influencers generally have a high profile and are particularly effective at raising awareness (Geyser, 2024).

B. Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis

Figure 1 illustrates the data collection procedure and data analysis for the study. The process began with identifying the participants' Instagram and Twitter (X) accounts, followed by extracting posts containing slang, and then organizing the relevant posts in Google Sheets. After completing data collection, the slang terms were coded and categorized into main themes based on Barseghyan's (2013) framework. Finally, the frequency of the main themes used was determined.
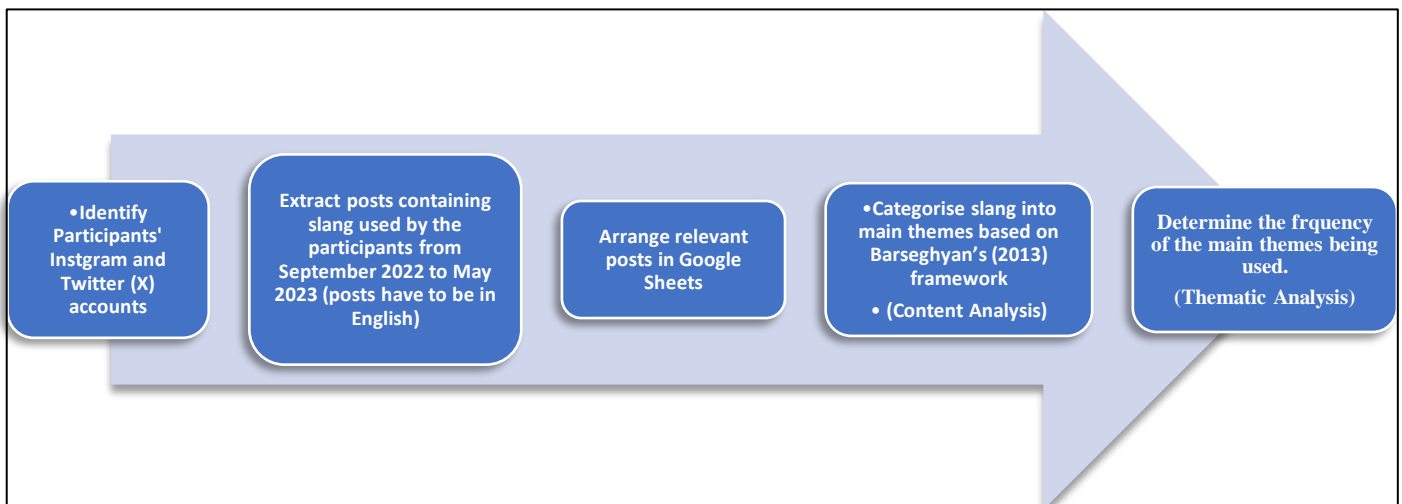

- Identify Participants' Instgram and Twitter (X) accounts
- Extract posts containing slang used by the participants from September 2022 to May 2023 (posts have to be in English)
- Arrange relevant posts in Google Sheets
- Categorise slang into main themes based on Barseghyan's (2013) framework
  - (Content Analysis)
- Determine the frquency of the main themes being used.
  - (Thematic Analysis)

Figure 1: Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis

C. Data Collection

The data for this study were obtained entirely from digital materials. There were no ethical concerns with data collection, as the social media posts were publicly accessible and intended for general dissemination. Instagram and Twitter (X) posts containing slang used by the participants were collected. The slang was extracted from their Instagram and Twitter (X) posts made between September 2022 and May 2023. Only English-written texts from their Instagram and Twitter (X) posts were manually collected, as English is the most dominant language

on the internet and slang tends to appear more frequently in English-written text. The data were collected by taking screenshots of the posts, copying and pasting the captions, and organizing the relevant posts in Google Sheets.

D. Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to examine the slang in the participants' Instagram and Twitter (X) posts, aiming to identify the types of slang employed. Barseghyan's (2013) framework of slang types was used to categorize the slang used by female Gen Z influencers on these platforms. The collected posts from Instagram and Twitter (X) were coded and categorized into main themes based on Barseghyan's (2013) types of slang, which include: 1) letter homophones, 2) punctuation, capitalization, and other symbols, 3) onomatopoeic spellings, 4) keyboard-generated icons and smileys, 5) flaming, 6) shortening, 7) leetspeak 8) clipping, 9) compounding 10) derivation.

In addition, thematic analysis was applied to determine the most frequently used slang by the participants. The slang encountered in each post was coded according to the main themes identified in Barseghyan's (2013) types of slang. The frequency of the main themes appearing in each post was counted. Often, the same main themes appeared within a single post. In such cases, if a main theme appeared multiple times in one post, the frequency was counted as one. For example, the frequency of 'shortening' in Figure 2 is counted as one due to its repeated use in the same post.
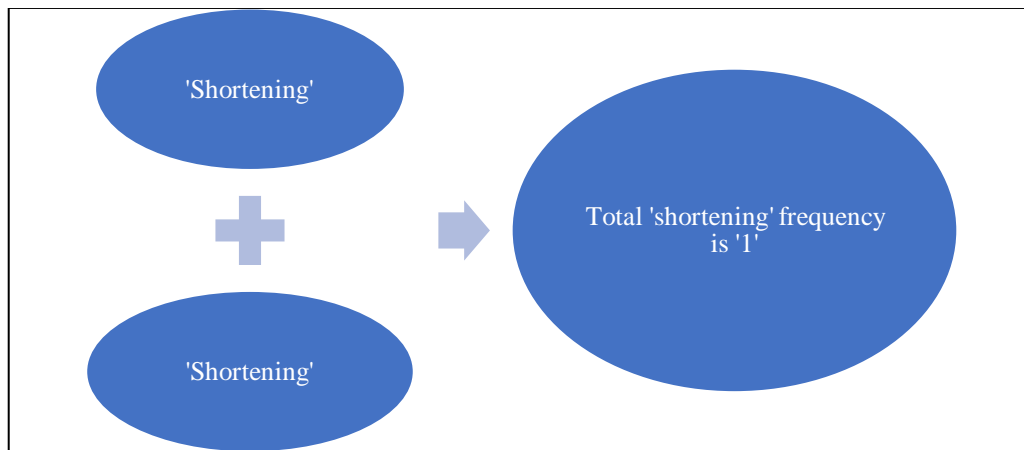

Figure 2: Frequency count for repeated main theme in one post

However, if more than one main theme is found in a post, each main theme is counted separately. For example, the frequencies of 'shortening' and 'clipping' in Figure 3 are counted as one for each theme, as they belong to different main themes appearing in the same post.
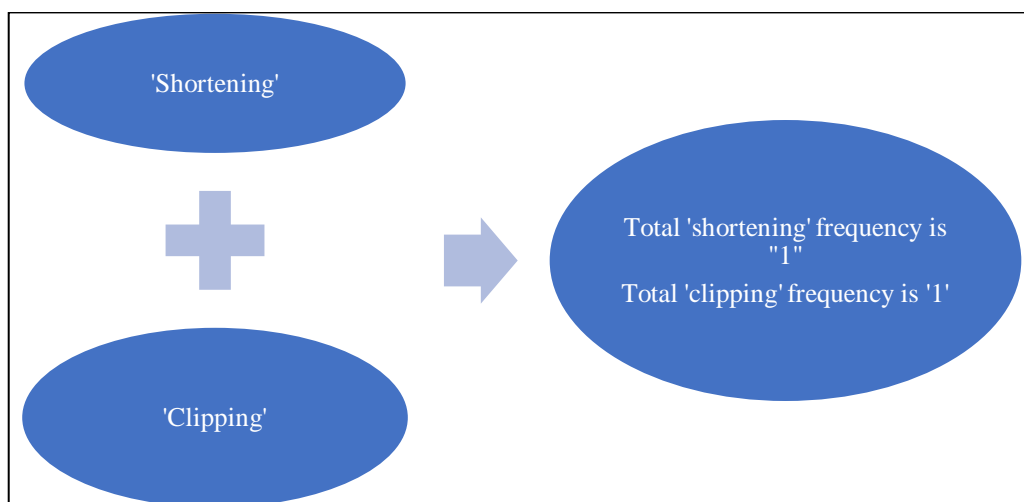

Figure 3: Frequency count for multiple main themes in one post

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The results of the data analysis are presented in relation to the two research questions of the study.

Research Question 1 (RQ1)

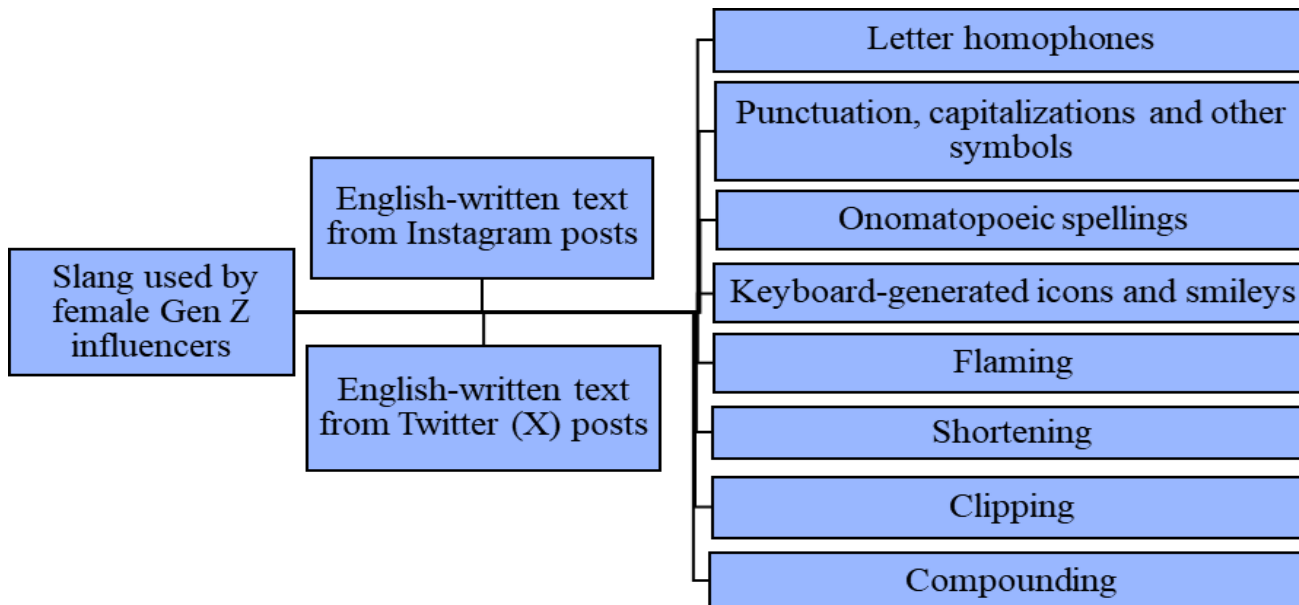RQ1: *What types of slang are used by female Gen Z influencers on Instagram and Twitter (X)?*

Figure 4: Thematic network of Gen Z Slang

The slang collected from the five participants was categorized and coded according to the themes outlined in Barseghyan's framework of slang categories. Figure 4 illustrates the thematic network of Gen Z slang. The results revealed that the participants (female Gen Z influencers) used a variety of Gen Z slang in their Instagram and Twitter (X) posts. It was found that eight out of ten types of slang listed by Barseghyan (2013) were used by three participants (PA, PB, and PC) on their Instagram and Twitter (X) accounts, including: 1) letter homophones, 2) punctuation, capitalizations, and other symbols, 3) onomatopoeic spellings, 4) keyboard-generated icons and smileys, 5) flaming, 6) shortening, 7) clipping, and 8) compounding, as shown in Table 4. However, two of the participants (PE and PD) used only seven types of slang, utilizing all of Barseghyan's categories except for "flaming", "leetspeak" and "blend"

Table 4: Types of slang used by female Gen Z influencers on Instagram and Twitter (X)

Types of Slang	PA	PB	PC	PD	PE
Letter Homophones	√	√	√	√	√
Punctuation, Capitalizations, and other Symbols	√	√	√	√	√
Onomatopoeic Spellings	√	√	√	√	√
Keyboard-generated Icons and Smileys	√	√	√	√	√
Flaming	√	√	√	X	X
Shortening	√	√	√	√	√
Clipping	√	√	√	√	√
Compounding	√	√	√	√	√
Leetspeak	X	X	X	X	X
Blend	X	X	X	X	X

The following sections will examine each type of Gen Z slang used by the participants in their Instagram and Twitter (X) posts. The sample excerpts were taken directly from the posts and remain unaltered to preserve their authenticity.

Letter Homophones

Letter homophones are words that sound identical in speech but have distinct spellings. They represent a type of slang that includes abbreviations and acronyms. Table 5 presents examples of the 'letter homophone' type of slang found in the participants' Instagram and Twitter (X) posts. Terms such as "lol," "ur," "soulm8," "u," "0," and "y m i" sound similar to their standard or intended words but differ in spelling. For instance, the acronym "lol," used by PE, stands for "laugh out loud." Additionally, it was discovered that PD, PB, and PA used abbreviations like "ur," "u," "0," and "y m i" to mean "your," "you," "zero," and "why am I," respectively. Furthermore, PB used the term "soulm8" to mean "soulmate" by creatively replacing the letters "ate" with the number "8." These findings indicate that letter homophones were employed by these influencers to express themselves both creatively and economically.

Table 5: Samples of Letter Homophones

No.	Participants & Date	Letter Homophones Found in Instagram and Twitter (X) Posts	
1.	PE (02/11/2022)	**lol** my time of the month is coming ●● ● ●	**"lol"** = laugh out loud
2.	PD (21/11/2022)	**ur** new lockscreen	**"ur"** = your
3.	PB (09/11/2022)	to my **soulm8**, there's no one quite like **u**.	**"soulm8"** = soulmate, **"u"** = you
4.	PA (14/11/2022)	grateful that the ones that matter are on the same page & can't care less about what the ones who speak with **0** empathy have to say	**"0"** = zero
5.	PB (11/04/2023)	ugh **y m i** so fuckin funny when no one is around	**"y m i"** = why am I

Punctuation, Capitalizations, and Other Symbols

According to Barseghyan (2013), 'punctuation, capitalizations, and other symbols' are features often used to emphasise anger or stress. The findings revealed that the participants utilised various features, including punctuation, capitalizations, and symbols, as shown in Table 6, to express their emotions. Based on samples (1) to (5), the repetition of punctuation marks by PA, PC, and PE, such as full stops, ellipses, exclamation marks, and question marks, indicates emotions such as disappointment, frustration, disbelief, confusion, and excitement. Similarly, the use of capitalization by participant PE in sample (3) expresses frustration, while in sample (4), it conveys excitement. Moreover, the combination of both punctuation and capitalization in samples (3) and (4) amplifies the intensity of the emotions expressed by participant PE, highlighting her strong feelings of anger and excitement. Furthermore, the findings reveal the use of symbols, such as the alias symbol used by participant PA in sample (6) as a shorthand for "at," and the plus sign in sample (7) as a replacement for "and." Therefore, the findings indicate that punctuation and capitalization were employed as alternative ways to express emotions, whereas symbols were used to abbreviate specific words.

Table 6: Samples of Punctuation, Capitalizations, and Other Symbols Type of Slang

No.	Participants & Date	Punctuation, Capitalizations, and Other Symbols Found in Instagram and Twitter (X) Posts	
1.	PA (20/11/2022)	the updates on awani are so slow**… 🟠**	**"…"** = to express the feeling of frustration or disappointment
2.	PC (09/03/2023)	also, if you dont believe in climate change, pls unfollow me cuz why is LA still this cold in march **??!!**	**"??!!"** = to express the feeling of frustration anddisbelief
3.	PE (21/05/2023)	why does the online passport renewal website keep **CRASHING !!!!**	**"CRASHING !!!!"** = to express the feeling of frustration or anger
4.	PE (20/02/2023)	**SO EXCITED FOR SUMMER!!!!!**	**"SO EXCITED FOR SUMMER !!!!!"** =to express the feelingof excitement or enthusiasm
5.	PE (25/05/2023)	i hate it when people say no to me like what do you mean no **???**	**"???"** = to express the feeling of confusion
6.	PA (20/04/2023)	new vlog tonight **@** 8:30pm!	**"@"** = at
7.	PA (17/02/2023)	his **+** hers	**"+"** = and

Onomatopoeic Spellings

'Onomatopoeic spellings' imitate the sounds associated with the concepts they represent. In essence, they focus on mimicking sounds through spelling (Gayatri et al., 2023). Barseghyan (2013) further categorizes deliberate misspellings as a type of 'onomatopoeic spelling'. Table 7 presents examples of onomatopoeic slang extracted from the data.

Table 7: Samples of Onomatopoeic Spellings

No.	Participants & Date	Onomatopoeic Spellings	
1.	E (09/03/2023)	impulsively booked flights n hotel on tour to Iceland **weeheeeee** am so excited 🟠	**"weeheeeee"** = to indicate excitement or enjoyment
2.	E (16/04/2023)	my fav brands this year is Petit Moi **hehe** 🟠	**"hehe"** = to indicate mild laughter or amusement
3.	D (14/04/2023)	one month later **haha** definitely did 🔵	**"haha"** = to indicate laughter or amusement
4.	C (14/04/2023)	trying not to be too hard on myself as this was my first ramadan in korea alone **huhu**	**"huhu"** = to indicate loneliness or sigh
5.	E (18/12/2022)	**ugh** jetlagged	**"ugh"** = to indicate annoyance or frustration
6.	B (22/04/2023)	**husbum** & **waifu**'s first raya together	**"husbum"** = husband **"waifu"** = wife

Referring to Table 7, it can be observed that PE used "weeheeeee" in an attempt to imitate the sound of excitement or enjoyment. Additionally, "hehe" and "haha" were used by PE and PD to represent laughter or amusement. However, "hehe" was used to indicate laughter in a lighter tone compared to "haha." Aside from

that, PC used "huhu" to express sighs or feelings of loneliness, while "ugh" represented annoyance or frustration for PE. Lastly, PB creatively used "husbum" and "waifu" as playful misspellings of the terms "husband" and "wife."

Keyboard-Generated Icons and Smileys

'Keyboard-generated icons and smileys', commonly referred to as emoticons, are pictorial icons that typically represent facial expressions or emotions using punctuation marks, letters, and numbers (Grannan, 2022). Emoticons are often used to convey a person's feelings or mood. Based on the findings, participants employed various types of emoticons, such as a grin, smile, heart, frown, and smile-with-tears, as shown in Table 8. According to samples (1) and (2), PE and PD used different emoticons to portray happiness. For instance, PE used a grin emoticon, while PD used a smile emoticon to indicate happiness, as shown in the earlier samples. Additionally, the heart emoticon in sample (3), which represents a heart shape, was used by PC to express love or happiness. The smile-with-tear emoticon in sample (4) indicated disappointment or disbelief, as demonstrated by PB. Finally, PA used the frown emoticon in sample (5) to represent sadness. These findings show that Gen Z used keyboard-generated icons and smileys to express their emotions. A specific set of characters, punctuation marks, and symbols on a keyboard were employed to replace human facial expressions.

Table 8: Samples of Keyboard-Generated Icons and Smileys

No.	Participants & Date	Keyboard-Generated Icons and Smileys	
1.	PE (13/05/2023)	does anyone wanna go to Amsterdam **:D**	**" :D "** = grin
2.	PD (21/04/2023)	next chapter awaits **:)**	**" :) "** = smile
3.	PC (12/09/2022)	things happen best when unplanned **<3**	**" <3 "** = heart
4.	PB (01/03/2023)	today, driver claimed he arrived but was on the other end of the building. proceeds to charge me w/ late fees when I was trynna walk to him then he drove off:**')**	**" :') "** = smile with tears
5.	PA (14/01/2023)	i hope this boy gets the justice he deserves **:(** and a much much better life from now.	**" :("** = frown

Flaming

'Flaming' refers to the deliberate use of hostile and provocative language among internet users. It involves using profanity with the intent to upset or provoke others, often leading to conflicts or heated arguments. For this reason, Gayatri et al. (2023) define flaming as aggressive communication rooted in various issues, including dissatisfaction, misinterpretation, and perceptions of injustice.

Table 9: Samples of Flaming found in the Instagram and Twitter (X) posts

No.	Participants & Date	Flaming	
1.	PB (01/03/2023)	**bitch**, I give 5 stars to whoever who knows what a guardhouse is… that's **fucking** bare minimum.	**"bitch"** = to demonstrate insult, **"fucking"** = to demonstrate strong emotion of anger
2.	PB (01/03/2023)	i **fucking** hate e-hailing services.	**"fucking"** = to demonstrate strong emotion of frustration

3.	PB (18/03/2023)	it's 2023 if you r still making snarky comments abt someone's weight gain/loss you're an **asshole** and nothing more.	**"asshole"** = to demonstrate insult
4.	PB (09/05/2023)	**Fuck ya** beauty standards and **fuck ya** whitening products!!!!!!!!	**"Fuck ya"** = fuck you = to demonstrate strong emotion of anger and frustration
5.	PA (19/11/2022)	you really think Malaysians would fall for this? again? **disgusting**	**"disgusting"** = to demonstrate disgust or loathing

Based on Table 9, the participants used pejorative or derogatory terms categorized as flaming, such as "bitch," "fucking," "asshole," "fuck ya," and "disgusting." Specifically, the derogatory terms "bitch" and "asshole" in samples (1) and (3) were used by PB as insults directed at someone she considered rude and selfish. Meanwhile, the pejorative terms "fucking," "fuck ya," and "disgusting" in samples (1), (2), (4), and (5) were used by PB and PA to express strong emotions of anger, frustration, and disgust towards people's rude attitudes, beauty standards, and disapproval of a particular topic.

Shortening

'Shortening' refers to the use of acronyms and abbreviation to represent words or phrases to create slang words. In other words, shortening involves the use of acronyms and abbreviations to create slang words. It was identified as one of the participants' creative methods to condense words or phrases while retaining their original meanings. Various styles or forms of shortening were practiced by the participants, as shown in Table 10. Examples include "kl," "gal," "w/ ma," "bff," "xmas," "pls," "yr," "ppl," "ok," "LA," "jk," "lmao," and "tlc. Participants PE, PC, and PA used acronyms to highlight the initial letters or components of words, such as "kl," "bff," "LA," "lmao," and "tlc." Meanwhile, abbreviations were used by all five participants (PE, PD, PC, PB, and PA) to create shortened forms of words. These abbreviations included misspellings, the elimination of vowels, or the replacement or omission of letters and syllables. Examples include "gal," "w/ ma," "xmas," "pls," "yr," "ppl," "ok," and "jk."

Table 10: Samples of Shortening

No.	Participants & Date	Shortening	
1.	PE (17/12/2022)	**kl gal** is back • **w/ ma bff**	**"kl"** = Kuala Lumpur, **"gal"** = girl,**"w/ ma"** = with my, **"bff"** = best friend
2.	PE (09/12/2022)	my **xmas** wish is to go home ◡	**"xmas"** = Christmas
3.	PD (01/09/2022)	September pls be good to me	**"pls"** = please
4.	PB (17/12/2022)	girl friendships saved my life. u just haven't found yr ppl and that's ok.	**"yr"** = your, **"ppl"** = people **"ok"** = okay
5.	PC (23/04/2023)	eid day 2 from LA • ● jk, we did a pre-eid shoot 2 months ago ● • the only way we could get a full family pic with everyone it's hard when your families on the other side of the world lmao	**"LA"** = LosAngeles, **"jk"** = joke, **"lmao"** = laughing my ass off
6.	PA (22/05/2023)	a little tlc never hurts ● •□	**"tlc"** = tender loving care

According to Izazi and Tengku-Sepora (2020), there are no specific rules for shortening words, such as eliminating vowels or omitting letters and syllables, as users develop their own styles, and even the same user may adopt varying styles over time.

Clipping

'Clipping' refers to slang words formed by shortening or reducing words while preserving their original meanings. According to Budiasa et al. (2021), clipping is a type of slang created by using a fragment of a word to simplify both pronunciation and spelling. It is a common linguistic method of word formation frequently observed in computer- and telephone-mediated communication. Several 'clipping' words were used by PA, PB, PC, PD, and PE, including "priv," "mid," "promo," "min," "app," and "uni," as shown in Table 11. These clipped words are commonly used in informal contexts. In conclusion, the findings highlight clipping as a prevalent method of word formation, creating terms that are more concise, easier to pronounce, and quicker to write or type.

Table 11: Samples of Clipping

No.	Participants & Date	Clipping	
1.	PA (14/01/2023)	how r ppl finding my **priv** insta	**"priv"** = private
2.	PB (09/05/2023)	what does it feel like to start your hair loss journey in your **mid** 20s?	**"mid"** = middle
3.	PC (04/04/2023)	Don't forget to use my **promo** code jpbrinx for 15% off with no **min** spending!	**"promo"**=promotion, **"min"** = minimum
4.	PD (13/12/2022)	booked my disneyland tickets through the @klookmy **app** and it was so easy and convenient	**"app"** = application
5.	PE (17/11/2022)	the hardest part abt **uni** is actually going to **uni**	**"uni"** = university

Compounding

'Compounding' involves combining two or more words to create a new word with a specific meaning, which may differ from the meanings of its individual components. 'Compounding' is also widely used to create a great deal of Internet slang such as 'line', 'name', 'down', 'up', 'dot', 'net' and 'spam'. According to Barseghyan (2013), compounding can result in either a single word or a phrase composed of two separate words.

Table 12: Samples of Compounding found in the Instagram and Twitter (X) posts

No.	Participants & Date	Compounding	
1.	PC (26/12/2022)	twenny, one trips ard the sun **witchu**●	**"witchu"** = with (prep) +you (pronoun)
2.	PC (13/12/2022)	one of my skincare **must-haves** #beautyofjoseon @beautyofjoseon_official	**"Must-haves"**=must (noun)+ have (verb)
3.	PB (19/10/2022)	today's aesthetic: **campus crush**	**"campus"** = campus (noun)+ "**crush**" (noun)
4.	PA (11/05/2023)	my first weekly **vlogmas** is out now●	**" vlogmas "** = vlog (noun) + Christmas (noun),

Table 12 presents examples of slang using compound words employed by PD, PC, PB, and PA, including "witchu," "must-haves," "campus crush," and "vlogmas." These compound words include various combinations: noun-noun (e.g., "campus crush"), preposition-pronoun (e.g., "witchu"), and noun-verb (e.g., "must-haves"). Notably, three of the compound words listed in Table 10 are written as a single word, except for "campus crush," which is written as two separate words.

Discussion of the Findings in Relation to RQ1

During data analysis, it was observed that Barseghyan's classification of slang types lacks clarity, particularly as some categories such as 'shortening' (acronyms and abbreviations), 'clipping,' and 'compounding' overlap in their formation, making categorization challenging. For instance, shorthand terms are often mistaken for acronyms. Acronyms are pronounced as new words (e.g., "RADAR" as "ray-dar"), while shorthand pronunciations resemble initialisms, where letters are pronounced individually (e.g., "CEO"). This overlap made it difficult to categorize certain slang terms due to the multiple interpretations of acronyms and shorthand.

Additionally, as Barseghyan (2013) highlighted, slang analysis can be somewhat subjective due to the constantly evolving nature of the material and the limitless scope of research. Some slang formations mirrored everyday spoken language written down, while others appeared exaggerated (Izazi & Tengku-Sepora, 2020). In this study, researchers noted frequent use of word-letter and word-digit substitutions by participants, such as changing "thanks" to "thx" and "mate" to "m8." These substitutions could fall under categories like "leetspeak," "clipping," or "shortening," further illustrating the complexity of classification.

As mentioned in the literature review, Gen Z slang represents a distinctive style of language that has yet to gain widespread acceptance outside its immediate social groups (Namvar, 2014). One potential reason for this limited acceptance is the prevalent use of profanity, often referred to as "flaming," on social media platforms like Twitter (X), Facebook, and Instagram. The normalization of "flaming" has contributed to negative perceptions of slang among linguists and educators. In this study, participants frequently used profanities such as "fuck you," "bitch," and "asshole" openly on their social media postings.

Research Question 2 (RQ2)

RQ2: *What type of slang is used the most by female Gen Z influencers on Instagram and Twitter (X)?*

As explained in the methodology section in order to answer the second research question, thematic analysis was applied to determine the most frequently used slang by the participants. The slang encountered in each post was coded according to the main themes identified in Barseghyan's (2013) types of slang. The frequency of the main themes appearing in each post was counted.

Table 11 presents the results of the thematic analysis of slang used by the participants on Instagram and Twitter (X) during the study period. According to the table, PA, PB, PC, PD, and PE used 257, 224, 77, 51, and 411 slang terms, respectively. The type of slang with the highest frequency was 'shortening,' which appeared 416 times. It was observed that the participants used 'shortening' as a creative method to abbreviate words or phrases while retaining their meaning. Each participant developed a unique style of 'shortening,' as demonstrated in Table 8, where examples of 'shortening' used by participants are provided. Furthermore, the use of 'shortening' allowed participants to communicate more quickly and efficiently. One possible reason for the widespread adoption of 'shortening' in internet slang, particularly on Instagram and Twitter (X), is the fast-paced nature of digital communication. Additionally, 'shortening' is particularly helpful in simplifying words, especially given Twitter (X)'s 280-character limit per post.

The findings also revealed that the second most frequently used slang by the participants was 'compounding,' with a total frequency of 181 instances. Participants employed 'compounding' to create new slang words by combining two words or morphemes, as explained in Table 13. The third most frequently used slang type is 'punctuation, capitalizations, and other symbols', with a total frequency of 164 posts. This type of slang was used to express participants' emotions and to abbreviate particular words, as shown in Table 4, which provides examples of 'punctuation, capitalizations, and other symbols' used by the participants. This was followed by

'letter homophones' (113 posts), 'onomatopoeic spellings' (57 posts), 'clipping' (54 posts), 'keyboard-generated icons and smileys' (26 posts), and, lastly, 'flaming' (9 posts).

Table 13: The most frequently used slang

Type of Slang	PA	PB	PC	PD	PE	Total Frequency
Letter Homophones	15	37	4	9	48	113
Punctuation, Capitalizations, And Other Symbols	47	47	8	4	58	164
Onomatopoeic Spellings	6	20	3	2	26	57
Keyboard-Generated Icons and Smileys	5	6	1	5	9	26
Flaming	1	7	1	0	0	9
Shortening	101	65	37	17	196	416
Clipping	9	11	11	1	22	54
Compounding	73	31	12	13	52	181
Total number of slangs used	257	224	77	51	411	1020

A. Discussion of the findings in relation to RQ2

Among the types of slang, 'shortening' emerged as the most common type used by Gen Z influencers on social media. This could be attributed to Internet users' tendency to simplify words and phrases to adhere to the regulation set by the social media platforms. For example, Twitter (X) allows only 280 characters per tweet. Thus, the finding is somewhat expected. Furthermore, 'shortening' is frequently employed in digital communication and social media as it facilitates effective and fast communication by condensing words and phrases. These studies (Gayatri et al., 2023; Izazi & Sepora, 2020; Nurul & Norazean, 2023), also highlighted that slang is used by Internet users to convey messages in effective and creative ways.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the female Gen Z influencers in this study employed various types of slang categorized by Barseghyan (2013). However, it is important to acknowledge that not all Gen Z slang used by the participants fits neatly into Barseghyan's proposed categories, suggesting the potential for these classifications to evolve and expand in the future.

A. Implication of study

This study offers several significant implications. Firstly, it contributes to the development of slang research within sociolinguistics, particularly in the areas of internet and modern slang. The findings can enhance the existing body of literature on slang and deepen our understanding of linguistics in online communication. Additionally, this study serves as a valuable reference for future researchers exploring internet and Gen Z slang. It also provides guidance and insights for developing similar or innovative research topics and methodologies, helping researchers further examine the linguistic impact of contemporary slang usage.

B. Direction for future research

For future research, it is recommended to increase the number of participants, as a larger sample size would yield more reliable and comprehensive findings on the use of slang, particularly among Gen Z. Additionally, incorporating another theoretical framework, such as Herring and Dainas's (2017) typology of graphical devices found on contemporary social media platforms, is advised. This enhancement would allow for a more thorough analysis of slang usage alongside graphical elements like emoticons, stickers, GIFs, images, and videos.

Consequently, future studies could identify and explore the diverse forms of slang across both written and graphical mediums.

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